Healing is a slow, arduous process. I spent days that grew into weeks laying on the couch, just gritting my teeth. The leg and shoulder drift between icy frozen and a blazing inferno. I would rather have them amputated than face the disillusionment that has nested inside my mind. The sledgehammer didn't only break my body; it broke something far more personal.

I didn't call the police, nor do I plan to. Fear does continue to consume me, but it's still not for my sake. He could smash my skull in for all I care. Cassie still holds my concern. I'm not an idiot. He used her to bait me over there. She's just a pawn to him. She'll be a pawn again. I don't know how thicker blood is than water, but I do know it's not thick enough to stop his unrelenting cruelty.

Between the strains of pain I am able to think of my next move. If he thinks he's won this he's sadly mistaken. The more I get bashed in the more I know that I have to do this. Congratulations Mr. Galvin, you've got me involved. I'm done waiting. I'm done holding back. But what could I possibly do? Call for help again? One thing I know for certain is that I'm on my own. I'm done asking the world for help. Goddammit my knee.

The fact that I'm indisposed hurts more than the breaks themselves. The doctor said that my shoulder didn't suffer any fractures so it would heal fairly quickly, lucky me. It still hurts though, but at least it doesn't remind me that I can barely walk. Fortunately I'm still able to drive and I'm still able to work. The crutches definitely made my excuse of illness more believable.

The trees are set ablaze long before I am fully healed. The leaves of red and yellow give me something to look at besides the copy-paste sitcoms and game shows. Other things remain on my mind. I haven't seen Cassie ever since I was attacked and my mind is dead-set on worrying. At least she isn't being locked out again, I joke to myself. It doesn't make me laugh. Not in the slightest

I feel like every door has closed one by one. Every bridge I've tried to cross has been taken out in explosive fires. I talked to Lucy endlessly about this; she still doesn't have the answer. She's the only one who knows how far my plight extends, but her hands are just as bound as mine. At least I convinced her not to call the authorities. If another keeper of the peace fails at noticing the world around him either Cassie is dead or I am.

I must be backed into a corner, because my mind considers options that no sane person ever would. Fantasies of mutilation run wild in its darkest corners. I'm sad to say that I'm finally willing to entertain these thoughts which wouldn't be out of place in a gory horror movie. I must say Mr. Galvin, all of the bitches and bastards in my past have never pushed me this far.

Perhaps the only thing keeping his life on a thread are the broken bits of bone in my leg. It allows my mind to wander to the old adage: two wrongs don't make a right. I don't ask myself what killing Mr. Galvin would bring. I know what it would bring. I ask myself if there's a better way to fix everything, a way with less bloodshed.

Then I realize that I don't give a damn about Mr. Galvin. I'm concerned for Cassie, and only for Cassie. Mr. Galvin is only the door that bolts the safe. He's just an obstacle, an unimportant obstacle. At this point, Cassie's life is worth more than mine. Then I get it. I need to get her out of there. I need to crack the safe. If the authorities won't do it, I'll do it myself.

Am I nuts? Did I honestly consider kidnapping a child? There's being righteously furious, and then there's pure insanity. I have a life. Do I want to give that all up to help a name and a face? The word yes resounds almost instantly. My life isn't much, is it? I begin to entertain this twine of insanity. If I decide to do this what would I leave behind? An empty chair in an office cubicle. A dime-a-dozen girlfriend? A two-story house in a battle zone? Friends where I don't even know their last names? If someone doesn't intervene, Cassie will be lucky if she can make it to a life worth considering.

Yes, I am nuts. I did honestly consider kidnapping a child. And I think that I'm going to go through with it. As soon as my leg heals and my affairs are in order it's over whether the law says so or not.

If my life was important, this would be the part where I asked how would I come out in the end. I already know that answer. My story won't have a happy end no matter where Cassie ends up. They say that a soldier who has nothing to live for is the hardest to bring down. Perhaps this mundane life that I live is finally a blessing. I wish I could say that leaving it behind was the hardest choice I ever had to make.

It's not.

You could destroy me completely and the world around me would be largely unchanged. Mr. Galvin could destroy Cassie and the world would have one less chance. One less chance for success, for greatness, for happiness. It's not often such choices are so cut-and-dry. I guess in a way that that is a good thing, but I'm not smiling about it.

The only question that remains is how. How am I going to pull this off? How am I going to get Cassie out of that madhouse right under his nose? I cringe at myself. I'm justified in my own sick mind, but it still feels abysmal to even consider doing something so heinous. It throws a spanner into the workings of my thoughts. The cogs grind slowly as my mind shifts between figuring out how the hell I am going to do this and telling me that I still should do this.

I eventually plan it all out. It's sickeningly easy. There were days my knee hurt too bad to go into work. I spent those days sitting inside, watching the wind blow some of the leaves down. I found out that Cassie walks to school and back. By herself. I want to smile at this fact. I want to cringe at this fact. I want to shaft this fact with contempt. I just accept it. It'll make things easier.

I tell everyone I know that I'm going on a vacation. I guess I can't say that I completely hate gullibility, but it's still not on my good side. Where am I taking this vacation to? Canada, or as close as I can make it. The vacation excuse also gives me a reason to empty out my bank account. I don't need it anymore. I make sure my car is at its optimal condition. I'm not having anything backfire on me. I take a hammer to my cell phone and I rip up every credit card in my wallet. Anythingincludes my own carelessness.

Every day my knee hurts less and less. Spikes of sanity crop up in the back of my mind from time to time, but I manage to ignore them. Every time I need a reminder I sit on my porch and take in a breath of reality. I look at Cassie's beautiful green eyes, nearly at the verge of tears. I see the way Mr. Galvin holds himself, like he's constantly ready to punch the next thing that breathes.

The day has come. I sit in my car, three blocks away from home. Cassie takes the

same route every single day. I hate myself for knowing that, and every other second a tic of what the fuck are you doing!? almost overwhelms me. The answer still hasn't changed. I suppose the only thing left to do is just say it bluntly. I'm kidnapping Cassie.

Cassie walks almost mechanically up the street. I get out of my car and stand by the passenger-side door. Cassie stops a few feet in front of me. She doesn't say anything. Neither do I. We just sort of stand there, looking at each other. When my mind finally shuts up about the consequences I'm able to get in a word edgewise.

"Hi Cassie. My name is Mr. Wright."

"My... father told me not to talk to strangers," she says. I get down on my knees and look directly in her eyes.

"It's okay. I'm not going to hurt you. I know what you've been going through. I want to take you away from all of that," I say, my voice shrinking with every single word.

Once again, we're in dead silence just staring at each other. Then it clicks. She's actually considering it. She's actually thinking about listening to me, you sick despicable human-being. I manage to open my passenger-side door in between the ongoing war inside my head. Cassie continues to stand there. I want to shout for her to just make up her damn mind as my conscience drags me further and further into the quagmire of morality.

Then she does it. She gets into the car. I close the door behind her and walk to my side of the car. I may be a damn robot with the lack of words, emotions, or actions I have. The only thought that crosses my mind is stop. Just that one word, constantly droning on, getting louder and louder. It occasionally comes with the neighbors doing this or go home or give up. The only words that manage to crawl from my mouth are "buckle up."

I drive off. Driving. That is the only thing on my mind. I'm driving. I'm not driving someplace. I'm just driving. In the past few weeks I've had to learn how to turn off

my more rational thoughts as they've flared up with fears and sanity. If I bothered to think right now, those kinds of thoughts are the only ones that would make themselves known. I'd like to tell myself that the deed is done, but the deed isn't over by a long shot. The deed has just begun.

Cassie doesn't move; doesn't speak. Her mind is probably doing the same song and dance as mine. Her eyes occasionally climb up to me. I hold mine to the road. There's nothing but me and the road. That is until Cassie starts crying. The raging thoughts die down. I try to speak, but can't find any words. Fortunately Cassie does.

"Are you really going to make all of the bad things go away?" she asks me through tear-filled eyes.

"Yes I am."